

MISSOURI

Paula F. Nickelson

Acting Director

Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services



Paula F. Nickelson was appointed Acting Director of the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services in March 2022.

Nickelson is responsible for the oversight and management of the department and the administration of its programs and services which protect the health and safety of Missourians. Serving the agency for more than 22 years, Nickelson has a distinguished career in public health and healthcare management. For most of her time with the Department, she has been a leader in several program areas, including maternal-child health, chronic disease prevention, and emergency preparedness and response.

Nickelson was involved in the state's H1N1 response and planning efforts following the 9/11 attacks. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Nickelson put her vast experience to work as a reliable, calming, and realistic leader to implement game-changing solutions during COVID-19. She helped establish the state's first PPE warehouse, led an interagency team that implemented the "box it in" COVID mitigation strategy for long-term care facilities, oversaw the state's antigen testing program, and led the implementation of the state's decontamination system for N95 masks for healthcare workers when resources were still scarce. Nickelson also developed strategies to establish state-funded monoclonal antibody infusion sites and was part of the team responsible for providing healthcare staffing support during two separate occasions.

Prior to her time with the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Nickelson served Missourians by providing vocational rehabilitation to individuals with disabilities and managing operations within rehabilitation healthcare facilities. Nickelson earned a Bachelor of Science in psychology from the University of Central Missouri and a Master of Education in counseling psychology at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

